



WEST SPA 5 AREA HEALTH OFFICE Chronicle

A publication for friends and neighbors of the West Service Planning Area

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Public Health Week 1

Skin Cancer Prevention 2

Connections for Children 3

Points of Interest:

- West Nile Virus
- Little Health Champions

Celebrating Public Health Week at Will Rogers Elementary

Every year, "Public Health Week" (the first full week of April) is celebrated by public health professionals and community groups across the nation. This year marked the 17th Annual Public Health Week (PHW) in Los Angeles County. According to John F. Schunhoff, Ph.D., Chief of Operations Public Health Division, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (LACDHS), "Public Health serves us all by preventing disease and promoting and protecting the health of the community. We turn to medical care when we are ill, but it is through public health efforts that we are protected from disease and injury in the first place. PHW is an opportunity for our communities to understand the fundamental importance and value of public health."

With PHW in mind, the LACDHS, Public Health, West Service Planning Area (SPA 5) collaborated with Will Rogers Elementary School in Santa Monica on April 22nd, 2004 to conduct a hand-washing campaign among kindergarteners.

Approximately 1/5 of the U.S. population attends or works in schools (U.S. Dept of Ed, 1999). The spread of germs is aided by the fact that so many people work in close quarters at school. The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This could happen when droplets from a cough or a sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on

[Continued on page 3](#)

Protection From West Nile Virus

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that is common in Africa, west Asia and the Middle East. West Nile virus was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999. Since then, WNV has spread to 46 states, Canada, and Mexico. In 2003, three locally acquired human WNV cases were detected in residents of Los Angeles, Imperial, and Riverside counties, and WNV activity was detected in dead birds, mosquitoes, sentinel chickens, and a horse in six southern California counties. WNV has also been detected in 2004 in southern California.

People usually get WNV from the bite of an infected mosquito. There is also evidence that WNV can be acquired via a blood transfusion or organ transplant from an infected donor.

Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with WNV will not get sick. However, people who do become ill may experience mild to moderate flu-like symptoms like fever, headache and body ache. The elderly and immunocompromised are particularly vulnerable to illness caused by WNV.

[Continued on page 2](#)

If you have symptoms of WNV, call your doctor.

Residents should follow the recommendations below for keeping mosquitos under control on their personal property:

- Avoid spending time outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are active. They are especially active for two hours after sunset.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and other protective clothing.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.

For more information on West Nile virus, visit the Web site : <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/q&a.htm>

State of California Department of Health Services

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY STRESSES SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

Researchers Work to Unlock Body's Ability to Protect Itself Against Skin Cancer

June 21 marked the start of summer. And as Southern Californians seek out sand, surf and sun, basking bronzed bodies, the American Cancer Society responds with a warning about the lifelong importance of protection against skin cancer, which this year will strike 1.3 million Americans nationwide and kill 10,000: Just one blistering sunburn in childhood sets the stage for skin cancers in adulthood.

Many Americans consider a suntan a sign of good health despite scientific evidence that exposure to the sun's ultra-violet rays is the main environmental factor in developing skin cancer.

The three most prevalent skin cancers are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Melanoma ranks as the most common cancer among 25- to 29-year-olds and is the leading cause of skin cancer deaths in this country, in part because melanoma is often diagnosed too late to be treated surgically.

In California, annual new cases of melanoma increased little until the late 1990s, rising from 4,455 in 1999 to 5,125 this year. Nationally, 51,400 persons will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2001 and 7,800 will die from the disease. Michael Curran, Ph.D., a postdoctoral research fellow in immunology at the University of California at Berkeley, says the increase in skin cancer causes serious concern among doctors.

"People are more aware of preventive measures and self-diagnosis measures," Curran says. "The Sun Protection Factor (SPF) used to stop at 10. Now it's 50. People are definitely a lot more conscious about it, so it's worrisome that skin cancer is increasing."

One of 17 California researchers recently awarded a grant from the American Cancer Society, Curran seeks to boost the body's natural defense against the most deadly of the three skin cancer types. He and his colleagues at the Cancer Research Laboratory on the Berkeley campus base their research on the extremely rare cases in which patients have recovered from advanced melanoma. They hope to develop vaccines that would enable T-cells to consistently combat and destroy melanoma.

Several clinical trials already completed helped to identify which proteins from melanoma allow the immune system to recognize the disease, adding to an abundance of scientific evidence showing that the immune system can identify and attack melanoma cells, according to James P. Allison, Ph.D., director of the Cancer Research Laboratory and an investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

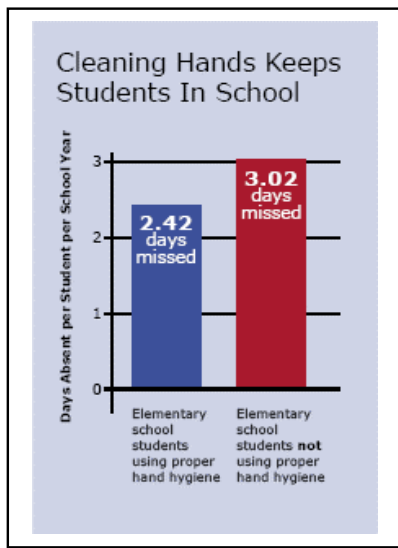
Continued on page 4

Celebrating Public Health Week at Will Rogers Elementary

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. As a result, nearly 22 million school days are lost annually due to the common cold alone (CDC, 1996).

The good news is that when children practice healthy habits, like proper handwashing, they miss fewer days of school.



Therefore, SPA 5 and Rachel Bressler, Will Rogers Elementary School Nurse, teamed up to help kindergarteners understand that cleanliness is important to health and to explain the importance of being in charge of their own bodies. Overall the campaign successfully reinforced the importance of handwashing, the steps for proper handwashing, and when it's important to wash their hands, to over 120 kindergarteners.

SPA 5 would like to thank Rachel Bressler and the Will Rogers Elementary School faculty and staff for helping to spread the word on proper handwashing. We have received feedback from teachers who would like to see our handwashing campaign again and so we look forward to providing our community with similar public health events in the future.



Connections For Children

According to a recent report conducted by Allison L. Diamant, MD, MSH, assessing the satisfaction of patients receiving primary care services from Los Angeles County Department of Health Service facilities, patients in the West Service Planning Area (SPA 5) reported that caregiver issues was a reason for delaying care. In fact, caregiver issues in SPA 5 was shown to be above the L.A. County average for reasons why patients delay care. With this in mind, SPA 5 would like to take this time to spread the word on one community-based organization in our community who can help address our patient's reported caregiver issues.

Connections For Children assists families and childcare providers in the West Los Angeles and South Bay communities to improve the education, development, and well-being of children. An advocate for quality child care, Connections For Children has offered support to families and child care professionals seeking information, referrals, and resources for more than 25 years. We are one of a statewide network of non-profit Child Care Resource and Referral agencies serving local communities. Our region encompasses almost all of SPA-5, with the exception of Beverly Hills and Ladera Heights.

Continued on page 5

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY STRESSES SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

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(Continued from page 2)

Research on the body's ability to combat melanoma has existed for at least 10 years, he adds. "And the question is 'Why isn't it more effective?'"

Dr. Martin A. Weinstock, head of the American Cancer Society skin cancer advisory board, notes that basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers are curable in more than 98 percent of patients. Left untreated, however, they can cause serious illness, considerable disfigurement and physical impairment.

For melanoma patients, however, the prognosis is often grim, Weinstock states. Unlike basal cell and squamous cell cancers, melanoma spreads quickly to other parts of the body, including key organs, and is responsible for more than 75 percent of all skin cancer deaths.

Weinstock notes that early detection and treatment are critical in curing all three forms of skin cancer.

The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives from cancer and diminishing suffering from cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Its current funding for melanoma and skin cancer research exceeds \$10.7 million. For more information or to become a volunteer, visit the Web site: www.cancer.org or call (800) ACS-2345.



Little Health Champions

In recognition of May being National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, the West Service Planning Area (SPA 5) would like to acknowledge the work that one of our very own school-based programs is doing to improve the health of our children.

Health Champions is a health education and voluntary health-screening program in the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD). Sponsored by Saint Johns Health Center, the program includes a health curriculum, health screening, fitness testing, and small group health education.

Studies show that optimal nutrition and fitness levels among our children are associated with positive school and health outcomes. Moreover, numerous studies report an association between being overweight or obese and various chronic health conditions, like cancer, heart disease, type-two diabetes, asthma, and liver disease. For this reason and the fact that adolescence is a crucial time for the onset of obesity, it is crucial that we monitor the nutrition and fitness behaviors of our children. In children and teens, body mass index, which is weight adjusted by height, is used to assess underweight, overweight, and risk for overweight. Healthcare professionals use the following established percentile cutoff points to identify underweight and overweight in children.

Underweight	BMI-for-age < 5 th percentile
At risk of overweight	BMI-for-age 85 th percentile to < 95 th percentile
Overweight	BMI-for-age > 95 th percentile

Continued on page 5

Little Health Champions

(Continued from page 4)

Given that children with a BMI within the 85th and 95th percentile are at risk of being overweight, Health Champions long-term goal is “to improve the body mass index (BMI) of SMMUSD students to less than or equal to the 85th percentile.”

The program is slated to follow BMI rates among a cohort of students over a 3-year period. Preliminary results demonstrate a positive trend in the students BMI as the percent of students in the healthy BMI range improved from 58% in 2002 to 61% in 2003, while those measuring over the 85% percentile decreased during the same period. Although these results are not statistically significant, it does suggest that BMI rates among the children in the program are gradually moving in the right direction and we anticipate the trend to continue in 2004.

Connections For Children (Continued from page 3)

Every family has unique needs for child care. Each year the referral counselors at Connections For Children help over 5,000 families find the placements that best suit their individual requirements for quality care. Our staff is committed to supporting children and families through resources on all aspects of child and family development. Education programs for parents offer vital information about children’s development. We also administer several government-funded subsidy programs to assist nearly 1,000 very low-income families cover child care expenses.

Connections For Children refers to nearly 550 licensed child care providers in our region. We speak with them on regularly, to keep our database as accurate and up-to-date as possible, so that the information we share with parents is correct. In addition, we work closely with the majority of these child care programs, offering resources and professional development activities to help them build secure and enriching experiences for more than 17,000 children. Among the programs we offer to enhance the quality of child care available to families are:

- Our *Toy Loan* van visits child care providers, loaning toys and books on a rotating basis. A child development specialist conducts *Fun Visits*, which are educationally engaging for the children and coach caregivers in new curriculum ideas to nurture children’s learning.
- The *Child Care Inclusion Program* offers support to parents of children with special needs and guidance to child care providers to increase the capacity of high quality care for children with disabilities and special challenges.
- The *Child Care Initiative Program* recruits and trains prospective Family Child Care providers, increasing the supply of licensed local child care. The program features an introduction to child development and business operations, assistance throughout the licensing process, and resources to promote the quality and sustainability of child care providers.
- The *Family Child Care Resource Program* provides information, training, networking opportunities, and individualized technical assistance to Family Child Care providers who want to create the best possible experiences for the young children in their care. The program increases professional development opportunities, strengthens the quality of interactions with families, and supports curriculum development.
- Our *Child Care Literacy Project* builds caregivers’ knowledge of how to foster young children’s language and literacy development and to encourage strong partnerships between parents and caregivers to work together in preparing children for school.

Connections For Children is located at 2701 Ocean Park Blvd., Suite 253, in Santa Monica, 90405. We are open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., and stay open until 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. Please call us at 310-452-3325 for more information or visit our website at www.connectionsforchildren.org.

SPA 5 CHRONICLE

Selected Reportable Diseases (Provisional Data)

Disease	Jan-Mar 04	Jan-Mar 03
AIDS	34	19
Amebiasis	3	1
Campylobacteriosis	3	11
Chlamydial Infections	308	316
Encephalitis	0	2
Gonorrhea	112	129
Hepatitis Type A	4	6
Hepatitis Type B	1	0
Hepatitis Type C	0	0
Measles	0	0
Meningitis	2	1
Meningococcal Infections	0	0
Non-gonococcal Urethritis	45	51
Pertussis	3	5
Salmonellosis	12	6
Shigellosis	2	16
Syphilis, primary & secondary	3	11
Syphilis, early latent (<1 yr.)	4	5
Tuberculosis	3	4

SPA 5 EXECUTIVE TEAM

Acting Area Health Officer: Martina Travis, B.S.N., M.P.H.
 Area Medical Director: Maxine Liggins, M.D.
 Director of Operations: Willie Mae Howard, M.P.A.
 Nurse Supervisor: Joy Bostic, RN, PHN
 Epidemiology Analyst: Farimah Fiali
 Health Educator: Jeremiah R. Garza, MA, MPH, CHES
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 Public Health Investigation: Ali Farjadi
 Carolyn Weinrieb
 Community Worker: Teresa Garcia
 Intermediate Typist Clerk: Hector Altamirano
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*Data are provisional due to reporting delay.



WEST SPA 5 CHRONICLE

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Public Health Mission: To safeguard and improve the health of all Los Angeles County residents.